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THE

R. Rutherford

CONSPIRACY OF GOWRIE,

A TRAGEDY.

“Were Moliere and Corneille to produce at present their early compositions, which were formerly so well received, it would discourage the young Poets to see the indifference and disdain of the Public. The ignorance of the Age alone could have given admission to *The Prince of Tyre*; but 'tis to that we owe *The Moor*: Had *Every Man in His Humour* been rejected, we had never seen *Volpone*.”

HUME'S ESSAYS. XVII.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY DAVIS, WILKS, AND TAYLOR,
CHANCERY-LANE,

FOR J. BELL, OXFORD-STREET.

1800.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER.

THE great difficulty of judging with fairness of one's own work, has been long the complaint of the Public, and of Authors the servants of the Public. That there are numerous, numerous faults in the following composition it would be folly not to suppose. The point, however, which its Author is anxious to ascertain, is, whether his mind is of that kind which is likely to excel in literary pursuits. It is often the lot of Man, that, after the labour of half a life, he discovers that he has applied himself to that for which Nature intended him not. The present Writer is young: should he fail in this, he has yet time enough, by diligence in some other less arduous study, to avoid that Ridicule which falls upon a miscalculation of ability.——

It will immediately appear to the Reader of this Dramatic effort, that, although it may not entirely be without interest to the moral and political Philosopher, it yet would be improper for theatrical representation. As the end therefore

is

is different, the means employed may also admit of some modification. That dialogue which would weary on the Stage, may perhaps entertain in the Clofet.—For the historical ground-work of the Play see Robertson's Scotland.

A few notes are added, against the wish of the Writer; he yielded to the judgment of a friend. They, however, may be omitted, and the work will read, as it ought to do, without them.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

EARL OF GOWRIE.

RUTHVEN, brother to Gowrie.

HENDERSON, a youth brought up in the family of
Gowrie.

JAMES, king of Scotland.

SIR T. ERSKINE,

SIR J. RAMSEY, &c.

MATILDA, the sister of Gowrie and Ruthven.

MACLENNA.

Attendants of the king, servants, peasants, &c.

The SCENE is at Perth.

*The TIME is the evening of the 4th and morning
of the 5th of August, 1600.*

✠ *The father of GOWRIE was irregularly executed
for treason, at Stirling, 1584.*

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THE
CONSPIRACY OF GOWRIE,
A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

*A ball in the palace of Gowrie.—Beneath the picture
of an armed chief hangs a sword.*

MATILDA, RUTHVEN.

Mat. STILL not arriv'd! It irks me this delay.
This is the hour of stillness and of eve,
When the loud tongue and politic brain are hush'd,
And the heart speaks. How dull and sluggard-like
Creep the long hours, when all around is mute!
The mind itself is heavily becalm'd;
That, were he here, I should but half rejoice,
Sick, sick with expectation. Thrice I climb'd

The terrace of yon turret, thrice I look'd
For his desir'd approach. O, tardy spirit!
Ling'rer, permitted to return in vain!
Methought, that as the bird releas'd springs forth,
And wounds with ceaseless wing the yielding air,
He would have urg'd his gladsome way with speed
Surpassing hope and foresight.

Ruthven. Nay, Matilda,
I ask not his return till morn. To-day
Bears on its luckless brow the stamp of Fate—
It is the day on which my father died,
And, as a traitor, to the biting axe
Vail'd his high head. It is a thought to cloud
Joyfullest meeting. Thee thine early years
Shielded from knowledge; for myself, mine age
Was ripe enough to feel, to mourn his loss.

Mat. Nay, speak not of the dead: my brother
lives,
Said'st thou not this was the selected eve
To witness his return? 'Tis strange, most strange,
That, when you left the court, he came not too.

Ruth. O, men there are, who love to dwell
on ill;
Who never feel the balmy gale of spring,
But they recount the tyrannous north, that kills
The flow'rets of the vale; who look unmov'd
On the clear light of heav'n, and talk of mists
In which the traveller perish'd. Such is he.

I mark'd his mien, I mark'd his mocking eye,
At that fair hour, when with a loyal knee
Before the throne of sov'reignty he bow'd,
And, to our house's dignity restor'd,
Rose 'mid the circle of admiring chiefs.
My rapt heart bounded as I bade him joy
And hail'd him earl of Gowrie. He the while
Welcom'd his honours with a doubtful smile,
And mus'd in silence long. A tale, that spoke
Of the large faith allegiance ow'd the prince,
Escap'd the royal lip—his crimson cheek
Flush'd at the word, his stature seem'd enlarg'd,
And scorn and anger mantled o'er his face,
Like the gray cloud that skims the summer bank.
I gaz'd, and, shudd'ring, dropp'd the hand I held ;
'To my tranc'd view the spirit of my fire,
Such as tradition notes him, when at Ruthven
He seiz'd the youthful ruler, once again
Blaz'd forth, rekindled in his fiery son.
Think not my fancy err'd—O no—himself—
The king—like one whom fearful dreams assail,
Started, and shrinking from the hostile glance
Pass'd his rais'd hand o'er his contracted brow—

Mat. Hark ! 'tis the noise of horsemen ! loud the
ground

Sounds to the steed's impetuous hoof.—He comes !
Let cold Distrust, who steals the bloom of life
From Joy's bright cheek, be far. He comes ! he comes !
The first-born of my mother !

SCENE II.

RUTHVEN, MATILDA, GOWRIE, *usbered by*
HENDERSON.

GOWRIE—[*throws his eye around the room, and rests
at the picture of his father.*]

Form revered,
That gazeſt on me with inquiring eye,
Thou look'ſt as I would have thee. Yes, 'tis I,
Thy ſon, the bearer of thy name!—The reſt,
Let the recording page, when I am gone,
Speak as my deeds ſhall merit. Shade revered,
Thus I renew the contract of my youth,
And ſwear me thine for ever.

Sword, good ſword,
A mighty hand, my father's, ſway'd thee once!
He taught thee gallant deeds. I graſp thee now,
I that perchance inherit not his worth,
Yet ſtill have courage to defend his fame.

Ruth. Not leſs the piety that warms *my* breaſt.
But nobler is the ſervice which preſerves
With ſoft'ring care the ſpark that glows with life,
Than tribute offer'd to the barren tomb.
Turn then, ah turn, from one, who hears thee not,
Or, if he hear, needs not thine idle love,
And from my hand receive as rich a gift
As brother ever boaſted. Liſt, Matilda,
Liſt up the trembling luſtre of thine eyes,

And, with a look like hers who gave thee birth,
Beam welcome and affection. Smile, my sister,
Smile like thy fainted mother.

Gow. Smiles! affection!

Affection grows by interchange of good,
Domestic charities and long-tried worth.
I, I a stranger on my native soil,
Most unendear'd, most unbelov'd, in vain
Demand a sister's fondness. Wiser far
Were it to bid her vent her swelling bosom,
'That heaves with terror of th' expected guest
Who comes to lord it o'er her father's fields,
And like a foreign spoiler vex the land
With his half-ownership, his new dominion.
Nay, never start, girl, I reprove thee not:
What though the purple stream that bathes thy
heart

Flow not for me, I cannot speak thee blame.
Fate, that has joy'd to desolate my life,
Gave me no golden hour to watch thy dawn,
And steal upon thy love with converse bland,
Soothing my rugged nature into softness.
In thy young joys, and in thine early griefs,
I, wand'ring exile, shar'd not, felt them not.
When some proud thane, with insolent disdain,
Scorn'd thine untitled beauties, and the glow
Of dignity offended ting'd thy cheek,
Fate gave not me to frown the wretch to shame

When the fair daughters of the realm shone forth,
Circling the lifted plain, Fate gave not me,
The wreath of triumph wound around my brows,
To drink with diligent ear the thrilling cry,
" 'Tis he, the conqueror, 'tis he, my brother!"
Now, after years of absence, I return
(Too late to win thy love) to scare sweet peace,
To mar thy wonted habits, calm delights,
And rob thine home of pleasantness.— Affection!
O, I expect it not. Love, genial love,
If it were felt, were felt in vain for me.
Like some gay dome upon a Gothic pile,
It could not build this frame of mine anew,
And would but spoil me for the thing I am.

Mat. Unkind, my brother! The connubial rite
That bless'd our parents' love, that made them one,
Was it pronounc'd in vain? or bound it them,
And them alone, in union? Holy rite,
For wider charities, sublimer ends,
Was preordain'd thine hallow'd birth on high,
When the world meant to be. 'Twas thine to teach
The soul of man to melt with milder fires*;
'Twas to create new duties, new delights,
To plant with families the social earth,
And join in heart the children of one bed.
Has then the petty wave that roll'd betwixt us,
The mountain and the vale that sever'd us,

* Milton.

Sunder'd our minds for ever? True, mine eye
Till now beheld you not. What then? The Pow'r
That call'd this vast of wonders into being
Unseen is worshipp'd, and unheard ador'd.
To doubt my true affection were to call
Untrue, unchaste, my mother. Fear me not,
I hold you in my bosom. Fancy oft,
Sweet child of Pity, graces banish'd Suff'rance
With fairest thoughts: and Distance throws, like
Time,

A sacredness around her.

Gow. Yes, 'tis soothing,
That voice of pity, certain. To the ear
Grateful, as toys to children. The wrong'd steed,
Torn from his native wilds, tam'd to submission,
Yields to the rein, and hourly feels the spur
Plung'd in his reeking side. The lord o'the woods,
The lion, unsubmitting — Well, no matter,
I thank you for your love, and will requite it
As largely as a worn heart —

Mat. Lift — the pipe,
Tuning wild music to the vacant air,
Awakes the slumb'ring eve. They crowd around,
The joyful peasantry, with homage meet
Eager to gratulate their chief. Reward,
Reward their honest zeal: bid them approach,
And, as they pass along the spacious hall,
Crown with thy presence their abounding love.

Gow. O, not to-night, Matilda, not to-night.
No pomp to-night.

Ruth. Nay, give her way, my brother.
Earth teems with ill: Time, marking in his flight
Woe follow woe, with friendly zealous hand
Plucks up the full weed as he passes on.
But thou, O thou, curious in misery,
Scornest the remedy that Nature's care
Provides for suffering man, and wear'st in pride,
Clasp'd to thy breast and treasur'd at thine heart,
The thorns that else were stingless. Bid them come;
And let this hour, an hour in days of yore
Sad to this house, become an hour of joy,
To be receiv'd henceforward with delight,
All ills forgotten.

Gow. Ruthven, pray you, peace.
I am not to be mov'd. And, gentle sister,
My mild embassadress, go tell my people,
This heart shall hold, when happier thoughts possess
me,
The tribute of their duty dear as vows
Made at the shrine of saints—But, for to-night,
I cannot with the temper that I would
Receive their worthy offering. Pray you, say so.

SCENE III.

GOWRIE, RUTHVEN. MATILDA *goes out, followed*
by HENDERSON.

Gow. Scene of my early years, hall of my fathers!
Receive me home-returning! once again
Receive a master! Thy majestic form,
And the drear aspect of thy pond'rous roof
Stretching its bold arch o'er me, greet me well.
With due solemnity it fills the mind;
And, as the dim cathedral's vaulted pomp
Bends to religious awe the captive soul,
Fits me for high resolve.—Frown on, thou pile!
Frown on, thou gloomy pile! from this my breast
Chase each light image, that with wily glance
May win me from my purpose!

Sir, our father,
(When he who sits upon the throne of Scotland
Was but a boy, and boy-like lent an ear
To the base flatt'ers that besieg'd his court)
Our father then, roughly perhaps, stepp'd forth
And swept away the swarm. Quick they return'd,
And under colour of smooth law, just law,
Corded him like a felon. This thou know'st.—
Unsepulchred and rudely earth'd he slept,
No rite perform'd, at Stirling. 'Twas to-day
He fell: to-day shall he begin to rest
Entomb'd with his progenitors. They start

From the cold bed of death, and rise to meet him.
The dark house murmurs heavily. Thy brother
Comes not alone. *His* father's corse, *thy* father's,
Borne to the dim vault o'er the fullen plain,
Ere the pale moon-light fade shall pass before thee.
Now ask, if 'tis a time for dance and song.

Ruth. Bid me not answer, for I cannot speak.
The strangeness of thy spirit chills the frame,
And like the thunder awes me into silence.

Gow. What! is it strange, then, that with filial
care

I sought a refuge for his lov'd remains?
My duty rests not here. My father's doom
Lives in my fevered brain. I was not born
To feel the stripes of fortune, and to show,
Like the thin air, no scars. O, I were dull
As he, the wretch whom day-spring never cheer'd,
Voice never sooth'd; whom thrifty nature barr'd
From light, from sound, awak'd I not at this!—
The woman and the stranger bid me wake.
A dame of lofty stature, on the heath
Wand'ring and unattended, cross'd my way.
A crimson band confin'd the sable vest
That in fantastic fashion o'er her limbs
Flow'd negligently awful. Dark her locks
Stream'd to the gale, whilst her uncover'd feet
Mock'd with unshrinking tread the flinty earth.
Fierce she advanc'd, and paus'd. Her naked arm,
Uplifted, startled my foreboding fled,

Who bore me back reluctant. With an eye
Of wildest import she survey'd me o'er ;
Then, in a voice which thrill'd my very soul,
She cried aloud—"Long exil'd Gowrie, hail !
"Son of a murder'd father, hail, thrice hail !"
She said, and pass'd with hurried pace along.
Awe held me bound in silence. Cold the blood
Crept in each vein. The mighty mother, Rome,
Despoil her forehead of its tow'ry crown *,
Not more majestic met the fixed gaze
Of him who falter'd at the Rubicon.
Fear is my scorn : But, if my limbs e'er fail'd,
My heart e'er play'd me false, it was to-night.

Ruth. It is MacLenna—she that to the moon
Pours mystic orisons—a hapless dame
That for a few short months has sojourn'd here.
Converse of man she shuns. 'Tis hers to read,
Some say, the ways of Heaven. Some think her mad
Did then a wand'ring maniac scare thee thus ?

Gow. O, trifles oft appal the stoutest heart.
The mariner prepares him for the storm
Warn'd of the coming blast, and rides the wave
Fearless, though mounting billows lash the stars.
In some serener hour the green sea smiles,
The sun beams bright, the vessel glides along,
And all is fair : if then the cordage crack,
The treach'rous sail-yard split, he starts amaz'd,
Terrors possess him, and confusion reigns.

* Lucan.

For 'tis the form in which mischance appears,
Nor mere mischance, that lords it. "Jove's own oak
"Kisses the plain: the strong-ribb'd trunk defies
"The tyrannous pressure of the invading wedge,
"Nor heeds the pond'rous load;—an infant strikes—
"Its fibres quiver, and the giant wood
"Yields to the blow submissive." Adverse fate
Shall shower upon my head an iron-shower
Thicker than that fierce flight that dimm'd the sun,
Nor will I shrink. But O should palsied Age,
Naming in accent shrill my father's name,
Hurl his unwarlike dart, my nerveless arm
Would fall the uplifted targe, and bare my breast
Unshelter'd to the fight. I feel it here.
My soul is wound so truly to the note,
That each light breeze, that plays upon the string,
Brings forth the wonted sound. She spoke, the dame
She spoke of him, my parent, and my heart
Leap'd forth to answer. Ruthven, she that sav'd,
* Fam'd in Italian song, the martial maid,
And, with cœlestial art endow'd, dar'd raise
Of unborn chiefs a visionary race,
Was not array'd, though dear to fancy's eye,
Holier than she, in majesty of form,
Who came to bid me hail.

* Melissa, in Ariosto.

SCENE IV.

GOWRIE, RUTHVEN, MATILDA, HENDERSON.

Mat. O gallant brother !
Worthiest to be the hymn of after-times,
Pride of his country, saviour of his king !
'Tis Henderson that heard the tale—Speak, youth !
The joy that riots at my heart is full,
And tears are all mine utterance.

Hen. Good my lord,
Let the glad tidings that my tongue relates
Win to my speech an unreprieving ear.—
O, those without, the followers of my lord,
Recite a deed—

Ruth. Speak, Henderson, what deed ?

Mat. A deed, that from our house blots all reproach,
Makes dumb the tongue of Envy, from the mouth
Of Calumny, the serpent, plucks his tooth,
His venomous tooth, and bids him range the brake
Despis'd and harmless.

Hen. Wakeful as the dawn
In the red east arose the king for Falkland,
Driving the stag before him as he rode.
The frowning castle that commands the strand,
And the salt Frith that rolls his waves between,
Were quickly left behind. The chiding pack

Made jocund with their cry the laughing woods.
Long was the chace, unwearied the pursuit.—
At length the noble savage stood at bay,
And, measuring with his branching front the throng,
Seem'd to consider where he best might die.
The monarch of the forest thought it shame
To fall by hands unkingly. Fierce he rush'd,
Against the royal steed, who started, plung'd,
Unseated his great rider. The wild foe
Flung wide his antlers broad, and Scotland trembled.
The bold earl then——

Ruth. Unfinish'd be the tale,
If it end other than my hopes portend!

Gow. The tale is o'er. I slew the dappled fool,
And sav'd the king. 'Tis all.

Ruth. Not all, not all!
The noble act bespeaks a nobler soul:
A soul, where gratitude delights to dwell,
Proud to repay tenfold the debt of love!
A soul, that inly conscious of its rights
Resents the rashness of encroaching power,
Yet stems the workings of ingenuous ire;
And at the common call of nature rous'd,
When danger presses nigh, forgets the foe,
And glows with ardour to relieve the man!

Gow. So let it be.—Thine history, youth, is
known.

This house has called thee hers. Nor shall she now
Withhold her friendly shelter. Thou art mine,

My favour and my praise.—Lights, lights. Matilda
Shall show me to the gallery. Lead, my brother.—

*[As he goes out, he stops and looks back at his
father's picture.]*

Genius, thou power that lift'st us to the stars,
Informing energy, creative force!
That doom'st the fate of empires with a nod,
Whom fortune worships and events obey,
Thee, thee, my spirit woos! Be thou my god!
Thou, from the rich stores of futurity
Culling the auspicious moment, likest Him,
The great Geometer of antient writ,
From unborn nothing bidd'st thy world arise,
And spread'st wonder round thee!—One, one died.
Awake, be just! assert thine injur'd rights!
What thou deniedst the father, give the son!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A place of tombs. Bearers pass across. GOWRIE and RUTHVEN advance from the vault. MACLENNA is discovered in the back scene, sleeping—her head reclining on a tomb-stone.

GOWRIE, RUTHVEN.

Gow. THE faint moon pales apace. The silver orbs,
That late enrich'd her nightly pomp, are gone.
Sole sparkling in the forehead of the sky
Plays the bright star of morn, like some gay steed
That in the proud rear of a gorgeous troop
Haughtily throws his head, though last, not least
Dazzling the gazer's eye. To bed, my brother.
We'll couch with the owl, at dawn.

Ruth.

Not I, not I.

These rites to-night have scared the gentle sleep.
"She lights on lids" fatigued with milder cares.
The waves of the ocean, though the storm be past,
Heave long before their crisp heads sink to rest.

Gow. So speed my hopes, if waking be the task,
As I contend to the utmost! Men have been,
Who, counting years by deeds, have wept to think

Their term of life a blank. How is't with me?
My crowding days, a joyless throng, have pass'd
Ignobly by, dull heralds of my shame.
Were they to fleet in dim review before me,
Scarce could I challenge one to do me grace,
Scarce say "This was not lost." An outcast I!
My native country, like a jealous God,
Visited on my head my father's sins.
The strange land, that receiv'd me, did it coldly.
The house that held me, held me, as an inn,
A sojourner, not a dweller.—Grave debate
Ceas'd, and the politic lord at my approach
Spoke of the bright moon and the brighter sun.
My countrymen, in rank mine equals once,
Whom travel drew from home, or mission high,
Shunn'd me like one whom Plague, the fiend, had
mark'd.

I wander'd o'er the earth, like him of yore
Whom men beholding, with uplifted hands
Cover'd their faces awe-struck, and confess'd
First-born of murder. Scotland! on my brow
Breathes thy chill air. I shall redeem the time,
And in the closing of my cloudy day
Hurl forth my bolts fork'd with avenging fires.

Ruth. On whom shall fall the bolt? Wild, wild
is he,

Beyond the trespass of the fire within
That bursts its bounds and blazes for renown,
Who with bold hand unlocks the eternal chain

That binds the dæmon Vengeance to the rock
Where Heav'n in mercy stations his abode.
When with broad wing he sweeps the land along,
In vain the wretch who loos'd him to the world
Strives to direct his course ; the monster laughs,
Mocking his weak adviser, and in sport
Filling the goblet high with kindred blood
Bids him carouse triumphant. O my brother,
Better it were to brook a thousand wrongs
Than thus to seek atonement. For my father,
Light lie his ashes ! peace be with his shade,
And all his faults forgotten ! For thyself,
Enough remains of thine appointed race
To win the palm with ease.

Gow. O there's the fear.
To die to-morrow were to die unknown.
The planet of my life is at its noon :
With downward slope hereafter it declines
To the dark sea, where, all its fires extinct,
It never beams again. But I will crowd
Within the narrow space that is allow'd me
Ages of action. Prudence shall be mute
Whilst Honour bids me on.

Ruth. If Honour call,
Shame light on him that shrinks ! But, ah, beware,
Left Indignation, who with angry foot
Smites the vext earth, because her trembling frame
Rocks with the blast that heaves her, take the garb

Of Honour to mislead you. Gowrie died,
Died to forewarn his children : tow'ring high
His spirit spurn'd the ground : he grasp'd at heav'n,
And, falling, darkness swept him from the day.

Gow. Now may remorse possess thee, recreant
son !

Is it for thee to blazon his reproach ?
For thee to light the torch that shows his shame ?—
At Corinth, he that veil'd his weeping eyes *,
A tyrant brother yielding to the gods,
Held not himself the sword. You, you reject
The cov'ring robe, and with unshrinking hand
Raise high the reeking blade. In Gowrie's breast
A spirit liv'd, that lifted him from earth,
That early taught him he was born to rule,
Born to chastise th' abuses of his age.
He follow'd Heaven's behest, and perish'd nobly.
Great minds are those whom Pow'r delights to crush.
The mean and sordid flatterer is carefs'd,
Is fortune's darling minion, is a true
Time-serving loyal slave. But he that wears
Erect with dignity his free-born brow,
Laments oppress'd despis'd.

Ruth.

Not so, not so.—

Of old, a fugitive from lawless might,
The mother Independance fought the wild.
She clasp'd her infant daughter to the breast,

* Timoleon.

Whilst Freedom at her side, her elder hope,
Trode with firm step. The gallant-minded boy,
Rude as the mountain winds that ev'ry morn
Play'd with his unbound locks, increas'd apace,
Anon, rejoicing in his hardy strength,
Joining the busy throng, he call'd to arms,
Rush'd in his parent's right against the foe,
Hurl'd the proud wronger from his high-rais'd feat,
And plac'd the sceptre in the matron's hand.
With gentle sway she rul'd: yet oft, fatigued
With slothful ease, impatient of restraint,
Freedom, still mindful of the scenes he priz'd,
Sigh'd for the license of his early years.
His sister then, her mild eye beaming love,
Her soft lip moisten'd with persuasive dew,
Would lull with sweetest song his troubled spirit,
Would in his widest wand'rings lure him back,
And soothe him into peace. The gazing crowd,
Joy'd at her influence, bless'd the princely maid,
And nam'd her Loyalty. Let her be heard,
Let her be serv'd, and Reason's voice severe
Shall hush the stormy passions to repose.

Gow. Why, thus it is.—Let wrong be heap'd on
wrong,

Ill pil'd on ill—let injuries mountain high
Whelm nature to the centre—honest men,
Fair-speaking orators, shall still be found
To gild the galling chain of stern constraint,

To varnish servitude with glozing art,
And call their easy meanness loyalty.

Ruth. Loyalty springs not from constraint. O no,
Its source is in the heart: it knows the wrongs
That man unciviliz'd inflicts on man,
And glows with holy zeal to guard the shrine
Whence right dispenses judgment. Loyalty,
Not bought with gifts, not servile,—like the sun,
Who scorns not to perform his stated course
Round the dim earth, though, source of light, he pour
In matchless majesty his splendours forth;
Like him, though blest with talents to delight,
With strength to force and intellect to guide,
Loyalty blushes not to serve her prince,
But places in submission her renown,
And takes obedience for her crown of praise.

Gow. O this is poetry, the rant of fiction!
She that steals colours from heav'n's painted bow
And dresses falsehood gaily. Some there are *,
(Whose knowledge too perchance shall cost them dear)
That with inquisitive ken have scann'd the skies—
O it is vile that they whom wisdom owns,
Should serve, whilst folly reigns! For me, this arm
Affords a loyal pledge. The life it sav'd
Shall not by me be injur'd——For the rest——
Soft—'tis the dame who met me on the heath——
Why, this is apt.——

* Galileo.

Ruth. She flies me, as the hind
Starts panting from the thicket. I am gone,
Else hope not for her tale. And, dear my brother,
Think not the slavish doctrine of the schools
Entames me thus. The deeds of Greece and Rome,
Like lights enshrin'd in tombs, are treasur'd here.
Enclos'd within the casket of the mind,
Lavish, they shine not to the common air;
Yet should oppressive darkness gird us round,
Mem'ry awaken'd would explore by them
Her passage to the sun. I bear them here.
Let but an equal cause demand the sword,
And I will tread on danger. Heav'n I fear.
Let Heav'n applaud, and I am thine to death.

SCENE II.

MACLENNA. GOWRIE *retires.*

Mac. O thou, that speedest to be born, whose
light
Purpling with dewy tinge yon eastern cloud
Bidd'st hills and vales awake! fair morn! to thee
Full many a votarist pours a grateful hail!
They ope their eyes to joy. I, I, a wretch—
I that have borne twice seven sad years of shame,
What shall I pay thee? Curses. For to me
Thy daily course brings nought but contumely,

And the remembrance of my murder'd lord
Who perish'd at the stake. Brings? Woe, woe, woe!
Remembrance never ceases! Earth, O Earth,
That in thine arms art wont to shroud the dead,
Now, whilst profuse of odours breathes the morn,
Now, now at least be merciful, be kind,
And hide his pale form from my wearied eyes,
Wearied with fev'rish sleep and the long night!
I shall not be forgetful; in my heart
Still shall endure my wrongs, still live my griefs.
No. I but ask a little little rest
To give me strength to bear them: lose them never.
Rather than so, would I solicit night,
Would pray for darkness, cherish of horrors,
Would court the visions that with hideous glare
Pierce my fir'd brain. Air, gentle air, breathe soft,
And cool my burning forehead!

SCENE III.

MACLENNA. GOWRIE *advances*.*Gow.*

Matron high!

Thou, whom majestic mystery furrounds,
Whom secret loneliness serves, whose roof is heav'n,
Whose house the blasted heath, whose bed the tomb!
Thou, that with solemn voice didst bid me hail,
And with the mem'ry of my father's doom

Didst greet me home-returning, speak again,
Speak, and unfold thy purpose ! If to tell
Aught of the murder'd Ruthven be thy will,
Or if to raise the mourning voice of woe
For thine own wrongs be here thy sole delight,
Speak, and command my service.

Mac. Power divine,
Eternal intellect, if such there be,
To whom is known the maze of human life !
If in my penury of means thy might
Hath rais'd up an avenger, praise be to thee !
Give me but that, and I have liv'd enough !
Not of thy murder'd father shall I speak.
O, if thy heart be filial, were my tongue
Blest as the syren's melody, 'twere vain
To pour its sweetness here. Thy heart alone,
Gowrie, must be thy monitor to duty,
Thy prompter to renown, thy guide to vengeance.
But if similitude of griefs, if wrongs
Still heavier than thine own, if blackest crimes
Wag'd on my peace by those who sit enthron'd
To rule in mercy and in truth the land,
Can fire thy soul with scorn and fiercer hate,
Not vain shall flow my words.

Gow.

I list in silence.

Mac. Fair smil'd my fortunes once. My father
died,
And early left me to a husband's care ;

A husband, dear to me as light, as life,
Whom science honour'd and whom wisdom lov'd.
Serene and unmolested in the vale
Mov'd on the noiseless tenour of his days,
Virtue his practice, knowledge his delight.
He number'd o'er the nightly host of stars,
Pursu'd the wand'rings of the cloudless moon,
And read the face of Heav'n : the pregnant earth
For him pour'd forth her treasures of the mine.
For him the green sea gave her shelley store ;
Each tree that crown'd the mountain, and each flow'r
That strew'd the dale, with ev'ry potent herb,
He knew and nam'd the name. His fame flew high,
Till Envy shed her sickly dews around,
Damp'd his bold wing, and press'd him low, low, low.
Calumny then, though us'd to lurk in shades,
Rear'd in the sun's broad blaze her terrible crest,
And with accusing tongue heap'd charge on charge
To swell the forg'd account, that leagu'd with fiends
Invisible, of fire, earth, air and sea,
With circles strange and rites of magic art,
He practis'd to destroy the world's repose.
Credulity, than whom no uglier plague
Taints the stain'd mind, assum'd the judge's robe,
Usurp'd the seat of justice, utter'd lies,
Which she (down heart) term'd oracles of law,
And doom'd him to the death. Superior pow'rs,
Angels of bliss and dæmons of despair,

In your eternal volumes write his truth !
Though oft invoc'd, ye never come to me.
It cannot be, that it is yours to pierce
The mystic veil that hides the world unknown,
And stand reveal'd to mortals, if ye are :
Else Hell at least, though Heav'n denied my prayer,
Had sent me aid, had lent her ministr'ring fires,
Fires, which even now I'd purchase with my blood !

Gow. Soul, thou reviv'st : yon preacher's moral
strain

Had almost quench'd thine ardour. I am heal'd.
O reasoning pride, O folly of the wise,
That with fond eloquence and pomp of phrase
Tricks out the sensitive stuff, that forms the mind ;
Deems it immortal, one, immutable,
For other regions than frail earth design'd—
Whilst, wav'ring as the willow in the wind,
And yielding as the surface of the lake,
Each pressure from without, each breeze that stirs,
Give the light web new shape !

Mac. I could not die :
For, on the day that clos'd my husband's eyes,
I sate not single in his widow'd hall.
His children were before me : on the floor
Play'd my young boy, whilst at my knee my girl,
Striving with little hand to climb my lap,
Broke the deep agony that held me mute,
And ask'd me for her father. God of mercy !

I did not strangle her. I wept, wept much—
Folded her to my breast, and vow'd to live.
Far from the place that gave her birth we fled.
Her father's fate conceal'd, she dwelt in peace.
Each rising morn shed grace and beauty o'er her,
And she grew up the wonder of the plain.
The wintr'y sun withdrew his golden light,
And the loud north came rushing through the sky,
Rousing the mountain stream. The mountain stream
Swell'd high, and, rolling down amain, swept herds
And flocks and cots away. The lord o' the soil
Pitied our houseless state,—a gentle youth ;—
He offer'd an asylum. He beheld,
Lov'd, and confess'd his love. I check'd his flame,
And told him of her father. Still he lov'd,
Still urg'd his suit. The bridal day was fix'd.
O curst Society! where wrong becomes
Parent of wrong ; where Power, with felon hand,
To hide the cruell'd gore that stains its point,
Bathes with new blood the dagger ! Tyrant force,
That tore my husband from me, once again
Conspir'd against me ; from the altar tore
The struggling bridegroom to the hated court.
There purple sov'reignty assail'd his weakness,
Urg'd him to break his faith, forbade the nuptials,
And cast us out, a prey to scorn and shame,
On the bleak world, there telling us to die.
My girl obey'd——she died——died on my bosom.

Gow. Hear'st thou this, Justice? Reason, thou art sham'd!

O senseless blocks, O fools that stock the globe,
That bless the names of legislating chiefs,
Hail them beneficent and wise and great,
Give them the praise, the glory! Prosperous knaves!
Who stole the noble savage from the woods,
And rear'd him into man, domestic man,
Man train'd to know his feeders, wait the nod,
And worship those that goad him. Benefactors?
Enslavers, hypocrites! who talk demurely
Of peace and order, equity and law,
And on the necks of others build their height!
There is no law but will, no right but power. . . .
I know not to console thee. Time alone,
Time, that pour'd oil into thine early wounds,
Can heal the woes thou feel'st. The monarch Time,
Like the proud Mede, recalls not what is past:
Yet oft he sends his child Futurity
With pious care to sooth the innocent heart
His stern decrees have injur'd.

Mac. Not to me
Can consolation spring, can joy return.
Hope and Futurity, the golden twins,
Commission'd from on high to feed the lamp
That burns eternal in the human mind,
Have slumber'd in their office. Thickest mists
Involve me round. No solitary light
Streams comfort to my heart, save when Revenge

Waves his red torch through the surrounding gloom,
And marshals me to slaughter. Visions, then,
Visions of enterprise and busy deeds,
Float o'er my brain. They pass, and all is blank—
Blank, waste and void. This arm, 'tis true, this arm
Might at the palace portal fell the tyrant ;
And for my life, I hold it light as air.
But 'twere poor vengeance to destroy the wronger,
The wrong, for which he perish'd, unreveal'd.
Be mine a manlier purpose ; mine, to tell
My suff'ring face to face, to pour my curses
Loud in his trembling ears, to shake his spirit,
Stab him amidst his fears, then die content.

Gow. Why, let the tempest rage. It likes me well.
Nature, that made me daring, meant me great.
Had I been born on some barbarian shore,
Where talent wears the garland of command
And mind is rule, no envy foils the brave,
No sanction'd usurpation bids avaunt
Merit's approach profane ; I there had liv'd
The chieftain of my tribe—or, had I serv'd,
Had justly serv'd a nobler than myself.
Here houseless Virtue bows the knee to Vice,
Science is mute, and Ignorance harangues.
Here Pomp and Pride, the daughters of Success,
Ride o'er the necks of prostrate multitudes,
And wonder at the groans that rise around :
Whilst honest Indigence, with shrivel'd lip,

Begs for the grinding task, that in his prime
Withers, like age, his strength. Here, man's last shame,
Stands Intellect mature, creation's crown,
Unbonneted to gorgeous Infancy.
Pitiful world ! brute habitants of earth !
I scorn you ; but enough I prize you still,
To shake you, nay to sway you. Tremble ye,
Who lord it o'er the land ! your hour is come,
And the throne totters as I stride along.

Mac. One child is left me still, my boy survives.
He knows not me, knows not his father's wrongs :
But soon enough for vengeance shall he know them.
Whene'er you strike, he, he shall aid the blow,
And strike in concert. I for him demand it.
Just is the claim : for Logan is my brother,
And Henderson my son !

Gow. Chain of events,
That hold't in union strange the deeds of men,
Thy secret links elude the searching eye !
It is the sister of my friend that speaks,
The mother of my charge ! I held thee dead.
The tale of shame not friendship's self can make
Light to the tongue that tells it : fairest mask
Is ever shown to those who most are lov'd.
The distant shore, that, as we pac'd along,
Murmur'd our sorrows to the midnight waves,
Murmur'd of wrongs, but not of wrongs like these.
But 'tis enough—I ask thee not to taste

The festal banquet nor the downy couch.
In thine austerities there breathes a charm
Too holy to be lost for mean delights.
The nobler gift of vengeance shall be mine.
With Superstition and her mutter'd rites,
And thee her handmaid to befriend my cause,
Soon will I fill the cup and pledge thee high.
Ruthven, thy fears shall drive thee to the toils.
Sister of Logan, smile, Revenge is thine !

Arise, dark Fury, from the womb of earth,
And dare the light ! The spirit that conceives,
The sternness that confirms, the zeal that fires,
The perseverance too that ceaseless moves
True to the destin'd goal, are thine—all thine !
The scowling eye, the lip that mutters hate,
And the heart-service of despair is thine !
Arise, be born ! enthron'd amid the tombs,
Propitious hear ! Ere the red sun go down,
The victim shall be known, the blow be struck !

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T III.

SCENE I.

The Heath.

RUTHVEN, MATILDA.

Ruth. No, sister, no. Whate'er the schoolmen say,
Such passiveness were treason. What, shall man
Curtain in clouds of mystery the Throne,
And menace vengeance on the gazing eye?
Shall we be told, when mourns the suppliant throng,
The Godhead dwells upon the mountain top,
And hears not the complainer? 'Tis profane.
Flows the full tide of pow'r impetuous on,
And, when it desolates the fruitful vale,
Seems it unrighteous to restrain its rage?
Or pours it like the Nile in pride along,
Its secret source lost in the wilds of time?
No, sister, no. Its origin is plain.
The work of man, from man the Throne derives
Its only right to be. All else is folly.

Mat. I know not that. The Pow'r, whose light-
ning glance
Numbers the sea's innumerable sand,

Shall He regard with carelessness the scale,
When kingdoms load the balance? He, 'tis He
That lifts the monarch o'er the prostrate crowd,
That bids him rule with delegated sway,
And who resists is impious.

Ruth.

O, not so.

The king that wields the sceptre, and the chief
That bears the avenging rod, are known alike
To Him who knows to punish and reward:
Alike their speed bestow'd, their race decreed.
If mad ambition, or the sense of wrong
Done to myself alone, inspire the deed,
Then am I surely impious. But to glow
With the dear love of liberty and peace,
To kindle bravely at a people's wrongs,
And stem the torrent of a selfish age—
If that be impious, virtue is a name,
And truth and justice are but empty sounds.
If there exist a man, design'd by Heav'n
To cheer with wisdom a benighted land;
Though foul Detraction scowl upon his fame,
Though the deaf adder scorn the charmer's song,
Yet shall he feel within a still small voice
Breathe an approving blessing on his toil.
And when the grave inurns him, Time shall speak him
Wise in the manliness of antient days,
Simple in manners as the guiltless child.
His counsels late posterity shall hear,

e

And weep at their neglect. His tomb shall stand,
 Rais'd on the shore of some wave-girded isle,
 The "sea-mark of a nation *." God is with him !

SCENE II.

RUTHVEN, MATILDA. GOWRIE, *with a book.*

HENDERSON.

Gow. She never told her woe ?

Hen.

Never, my lord.

She lifted up her folded hands to heav'n,
 And fled in haste away, I well remember
 Once, while the summer-sun went gently down,
 Mine honour'd mistress on the river's bank,
 Pensive, reclined her head. MacIenna there,
 Unseen, at distance gaz'd, and wept in silence.
 Forwards I sprung. On me she turn'd her eye ;
 And with a shriek that might have seem'd a laugh,
 Had not her features worn a fearful form
 Nearer allied to madness than to mirth,
 She rush'd along the plain and disappear'd.

* Like a great sea-mark, standing ev'ry flaw,
 And saving those that eye him.

SHAKESPEARE'S CORIOLANUS.

Quoted in the British House of Commons,

June 10, 1794.

Mat. Of me ye spoke. Your converse fears not me.

Slander is mute when Faithfulness is near :
And Henderson, my brother, is the knight
That wears Matilda's colours. Truth to say,
It is a loyal and a valiant youth.
Though danger menac'd with his darkeſt brow,
My brave defender to the furtheſt Ind,
Like fiery Perſeus hors'd upon the winds,
Would ſpeed for my deliv'rance.

Hen.

Smile not, lady.

The occaſion and the ſervice are of earth ;
Place, time and power, the accidents of life,
Stand at the ſacred font and give them name :
The purer will, perpetual and unchang'd,
Feels her own fair intents, and is of heav'n.

Gow. Aye, Henderson, and poor of heart is he
Who, from this petty orb of mean events,
This narrow ſhallow round of things that are,
Turns not in ſickneſs and diſguſt away,
Sending the ſpirit that informs him forth
Through the rich fields of poſſibility.

Hen. Alas, my lord, that, that's the ſecret vice,
The taint that undermines the healthful frame.
I feel it. I that leaſt ſhould feel its force,
Strive but in vain to fix the wanderer down,
As the condition of my lot demands.
The child of Charity and Chance am I,

Desertless, powerless, helpless, all but thanks!
 Yet there are hours, when, like the vagrant fire
 That flits along the moor or marshy dell,
 Glimm'ring athwart the chambers of the brain,
 The light of hope, though reason frown, displays,
 Far from the time that is, a brighter scene.
 Power and distinction court me. Sometimes War
 Stands on a pile of slain, and woos me hence.
 Sometimes the fav'rer Fortune strikes the ground,
 Mines of exhaustless treasure are disclos'd.
 Peopled with lovely hazards is the land :
 Ruffians assault the gate, whom I repel.
 Tracking the foot that creeps in stealth along,
 The lifted arm of murder I arrest.
 I snatch my drowning master from the waves,
 And bear thee, lady, from devouring flames ;
 Then start awak'd, and sigh to find it false.

Mat. Well, bid the sigh depart. I rate thee high.
 It is to imitate the will divine,
 To esteem the giver rather than the gift.
 The humble adoration of the heart
 Rises, a grateful cloud, and kisses heav'n :
 The incense of the mighty and the proud
 Hovers in mists, and but insults the sun.

Ruth. Imagination, boundless is thy sway.
 The coldest feel thee : but to minds of fire
 Thou com'st descending on the whirlwind's wing ;
 Truth, Reason, fly before thee ! thou art Truth,

Thou, Reason. All the faculties are thine !
Is there no touchstone, none ? to break the spell—
And try the spirits, if the sky be theirs ?
Surely there lives an oracle within,
And he that listens cannot be deceiv'd.

Gow. Youth, were the fire that gave thee being
known,
And had he perish'd by some ruffian's hand—
Surviv'd his murd'rer in remorseless pomp—
What would the force that animates thee teach ?

Hen. Before the throne the cry of blood should rise.
I would demand the combat, or the death.

Gow. Were the strife wag'd with common foes,
'twere well.

What if the bloody deed were Ruthven's act ?
Say, that the king himself——

Hen. O, good my lord,
Ask me not that. I cannot answer that.
To him, my lord, to him I owe my all—
That I exist is his. I'd fly, fly far,
To some lone waste, and bid this poor heart break.
And for the king—the king, they say, is sacred—
I should weep much, and leave his fate to Heaven.

Gow. Take charge of this, and, as you pass within,
Replace it in the study.

Mat. Read'st thou that ?
It is a tablet of conspiracies.
I have perus'd it oft. 'Tis sad to think,

In the long chronicle of a jarring world,
How few have held for virtue's sake the sword.
A patriot is the wonder of an age.
A hundred daggers aim'd at Cæsar's life,
But one alone was guiltless.

Ruth.

Hero, fage,

Not, not in vain thou diedst! not vain the power,
Whose shrine, through life, thine adoration grac'd,
Since it extorts from enmity itself
The tributary praise that owns thy worth!

Gow. If gems, like prizeless shells, the beach
bestrew'd,

The diamond and the pebble were the same.
Rareness is virtue's essence, wisdom's crown.
'Tis rareness stamps their merits with renown,
Conceal them as they may. The taper's light
Wins in the lonely vale the traveller's eye,
And soon is cheer'd with frequent feet the path.
Thus hidden virtue will at last be known,
And gather homage from a wond'ring world.

Ruth. Poor is the homage that the world bestows.
A true divinity, a real good,
Whether the few or numerous herd ador'd,
Virtue would still be virtue, still supreme.

Mat. (taking the book) The sun rides on. Your
new domain invites.
This charge be mine.——

How intricate is man !
How weak in action, and how firm in thought !
He passes onward through the vale of time,
And, having liv'd his year, with precept sage
Pens, as a legacy for after days,
His follies and his crimes. Another comes, }
Cons in his fall of life his grandfire's tale,
And perishes from earth. Man follows man,
Maxim succeeds to maxim, age to age.
The letter'd dome records but his disgrace,
And the grave closes on the wise buffoon !

SCENE III.

GOWRIE, RUTHVEN.

Gow. The new domain ! O wither'd be the power,
Accurs'd the tyranny, that drove me forth !
Each name that meets mine ear, each deed achiev'd
By happier men, upbraids me with the wrong.
Each faithful hind, that as we pass along
Salutes thee, grateful, with a smile of love,
Upbraids me with the wrong. Had I been here,
This arm amid the first had plac'd my name.
Had I been here—I too should be belov'd.

Ruth. Feed not this fever that consumes thy peace.
For this, did Heaven confer the plastic power
To cheer with visions of delight the mind,
And picture forms more fair than nature's hues ?
O 'tis perverse. It thwarts the will divine,

Blots out the mild benevolence that beams
Radiant through nature's works to mortal eyes,
And places on the throne that guides the world
A God of terrors, to be fear'd, not lov'd.
If vanquish'd Reason fail, let Fancy's self
Dispel the noxious gloom that Fancy rais'd.
Bid her arise and tell of joys to come,
Of golden pleasures and ecstatic dreams,
Of cities peopled, palaces restored,
And yellow harvests nodding o'er the land.
Bid her record the praise, the rich renown,
Enwreath'd for him who sav'd his country's chief.—
His shall be power. Him Scotland shall revere,
The guardian of her weal, her sov'reign's friend.

Gow. What! league with him who seal'd my
father's doom?

Concord with him? No: were the wide world waste,
Were utter desolation my resort,
And only barren Silence my companion,
No commerce would I hold with him—with him
No terms should buy my friendship—till the blood
Of my lost parent were aton'd in tears
And bitterness of anguish. Fancy paints
In other semblances and other hues
The glorious Future that awaits the brave.
It tells me dear revenge shall yet be mine.
It tells me too how great the fame in arms—
But what are arms or what is fame to me?

Away with self, I care not for myself—
Mine is a juster and a nobler cause.
For thee, my fire, what, what had I achiev'd?
The smother'd fire, that lingers in this frame,
Fann'd by the light breath of its native air,
How had it rear'd to heav'n its spiry folds,
How blaz'd amid the clouds! Dark, dark is now
And tenantless the mansion of my heart.
Adverse to joy, the desolation owns
One only guest a welcome inmate there—
Vengeance, that daily calls the thunder down!

Ruth. On whom? the king? A child—a child was
he—

Gow. Why, what was I? I lifted not the sword:
An unoffending child, they spar'd not me:
Me they despoil'd of honour—Me they drove
In vengeance from the land. Yet all was well,
All innocent, all just. My spirit bow'd,
Low bow'd to earth. My virtue wearied out,
They call me back, a beggar for mine own.
Still all is well, all innocent, all just—
Nay more than just, all merciful, all good!
And do I now not roll me in the dust?
And do I now not kiss the sacred hand
That lifts me from the ground, that, greatly kind,
Restores me back what it purloin'd of yore?
I must be grateful, must I? must be tame?
Me retribution suits not. Kings alone

Are privileg'd to feel. Slaves, slaves are we !
Resentment knows not us !—I tell thee, sir,
Power is the license, power is the defence :
Justice has long been ours, we want but power.
And he that boasts of energy within
Or wants not power, or shall not want it long.

Ruth. O full of danger to the surest foot
Is the rough path the human being treads !
Evil, the lot of man, infects unseen,
And, parted from the intent, pervades the means.
The spring, that issues from the crystal rock,
Preserves not long the brightness of its birth :
And in the purest deeds of mortal minds
Some baser motive mingles unperceived,
And taints the fair design. So judge me, God,
Were it alone before my father's tomb
To pay the debt——

Gow. O, brother of my soul !
There, there's the limit ; I demand not more.
It is to prove that we are sons indeed ;
It is to wipe dishonour from our name ;
It is to punish wrong, establish law,
Sweep from the realm's records this shameful stain,
This precedent of ill, and teach the world
No might can render tyranny secure,
No time absolve oppression ! Still they live,
The ministers of evil ! still they reign,
The counsellors of murder ! they besiege

The regal throne, and hem the monarch in !
What, shall we offer terms, make compromise
With these, the robbers of the land, with these
The blood-hounds of corruption ? If to buy
A foul pre-eminence we stoop to that,
May scorn pursue us ever ; public hate
Hoot us with curses to an early grave ;
And, as the eternal night of death draws on,
My father's spirit stand before our eyes
To mock with pallid smile his coward offspring !

Ruth. Peace, pray you, peace. I am not what
I was.

Wanted I this to drive me to the gulph,
Already standing on the deadly brink,
Eager to plunge and reckless of my fate ?
Visions of fear have visited my sleep,
Painting the scenes of yesternight anew.
Thrown lightly on my bed, the star of morn
Unquench'd in heaven, I closed my wearied eyes.
Borne to the vault, I stood amongst the dead :
In long array the coffin'd heroes slept :
Sudden the dank sepulchral arches seem'd,
Fill'd with no earthly vapour, to dilate.
Pale, as the mist of autumn on the moor,
A shadowy light diffus'd itself around.
Dark, in the midst, unheard till seen, a form,
An armed form, uprear'd its helmed head.
Slowly it mov'd. I shudder'd as it pass'd.

A woman follow'd next. Her noiseless feet
Parted the gleam. She smil'd my mother's smile,
And paus'd. Anon look'd back the darker shade.
Her smile was changed to terror. She repell'd
My murmur'd prayer, and wept. I rais'd mine eyes—
The helmed form—my father—I awoke!

SCENE IV.

MACLENNA, RUTHVEN, GOWRIE.

Mac. Perturbed spirit, yes! these eyes beheld
The darksome cave turn pale at thine approach!
I felt the solid earth beneath thee shake.
I mark'd thy crested helmet float along,
Mark'd thy paternal eye in anger glance
Scorn on the trembler there! Thine hour is come!
The tempest is at hand. The thunder stirs
In fitful dreams upon his iron couch.
He starts anon to vengeance! Vengeance now,
Whilst Mercy rising quits her golden seat,
Before the footstool of the throne divine
Presents the fated urn that holds the lot:
The lot, that strives impatient to be drawn:
The lot, that promises a nameless deed!
Choose—or divorce thee from the name thou bear'st,
And give thine honours for the hand of shame

To brand with infamy in times to come !

Ruth. Why, what art thou, that in the doubtful
hour

Thus steal'st upon my counsel ? Get thee far,
Disturber of my quiet, get thee far !

I fought to do thee good, thou fled'st me then.
Now, when a deed of terror calls me forth—

Mac. Why, now I burst upon thee. I confess it.
Griefs are my comforts—terrors my delights.

When fiery meteors glanc'd athwart the gloom,
When madding thunders rag'd along the skies,
And the rent earth resounded to the roar,

Have I not, joyous, rush'd along the plain,

My naked head half-bending to the blast,

And bade be bless'd the glories of the storm ?

And shall the battle of the mind delight

Less than the petty warfare of the clouds ?

Why, I have hung upon this hour in hope,

Till my mind ach'd, and my bewilder'd spirit,

Lost in the phantasies itself had rais'd,

Shriek'd unawares and call'd me back to life.

Ruth. What wouldst thou have me do ? what,
what become ?

Gow. O be thyself, my brother, be thyself !

The oraculous heav'n calls out upon thy name.

The mystic earth sends forth her buried dead.

A messenger of anger is in arms,

Whom to reject were to be man no more :

Whom to have seen is cause, and cause enough,
To pierce the mother at whose breasts we hung :
Whom but to name is to imbibe a fire,
Inexorable, fierce.—O worthy brother !
Thro' me my mother speaks, thro' me she pleads.
Oh, by the sadness of her parting sigh—
This hand, my brother, once was lock'd in hers—
She clasp'd it, dying, as a hallow'd pledge—
She died in shame—(withdraw it not)—in shame,
Rest of her honours, of her husband rest.
I stood not, I, by her maternal couch.
She bless'd her children—I, I heard it not.
In the dark hour that tore me from her arms,
She charg'd me cherish above life my fire ;
Charg'd me to wear his memory like a charm.
That, that I heard. I heard, and I obey.
'Tis not to me this visitation comes :
The sepulchre for me is undisturb'd.
On thee, and thine, my brother, be the curse !

Ruth. Oh, whither am I led ? That nature's laws
When nature's Ruler bid may stand annull'd ;
That after death still ling'ring upon earth
The disembodied spirit may present
A shadowy image to the gazing moon ;
That, when the grosser frame is bound in sleep,
Spirit with mortal spirit may discourse
And utter secret things, I not deny :
For to deny it, were to war with Heav'n.

But that each dream, each phantom of the night—
O thou, that on the tablet of the heart
Settest the seal of truth—that to the sense,
The inward sense, dost more assurance give
In softest whisper than the thunder's voice—
To whom the very inspiration calls,
And of her presence asks no test but thee—
Conviction, fire-eyed seraph, thou art here,
And, like the wretch who cannot choose but look
When the bright heav'n wide flashes on his view,
I gaze and I am lost.

Gow.

What says my brother?

Ruth. I cannot touch with sympathy the breast
Clos'd with eternal bars against belief.
I cannot animate the senseless stone,
And bid it tremble with the zephyr's breath;
But what I feel, I feel. World, stand aloof!
Come not betwixt the adorer and the ador'd,
Nor steal me from the altar, where I bend.
Gowrie, in all that well befits a man,
With humbleness to heav'n, with firmness else,
I do subject me to the zeal thou feel'st.
And thou, dark patroness of deeds unborn,
Who stand'st undaunted o'er the blind profound,
Impatient of the spectres soon to rise,
Whence and what art thou? wherefore art thou here,
And why shar'st thou in this unfathom'd work?

SCENE V.

HENDERSON, MACLENNA, GOWRIE, RUTHVEN.

Horn without.

Hen. A breathless messenger, my lord, attends,
Sent by the laird of Ramsay from the king.
The morning's hunt hath hither led the chase.
The king, the king, my honour'd lords, is nigh.
Within an hour he means to rest him here.

Gow. Reels not our hope with joy? The lion comes.
Let Welcome laugh aloud and clap the hands,
And Eagerness spread wide the castle gates!
Stand not amaz'd. What thinks the doubter now?
Is there no fortune sitting in the clouds,
And show'ring gifts upon the sons of men?
Away, go forth and bid the monarch hail.
Away. This hour, instinct with life, this hour
The wheels of enterprise begin to roll.
The time is brief, and calls for active hearts.
Away, Macleenna. Soon we meet again.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

An open space before the ball.

MACLENNA.

Mac. It is arriv'd, the cherish'd hour of hope,
The expected nursling of long sorrowing years.
It is arriv'd, this, this for which I liv'd.
Holding her breath and motionless, Suspense
Poises with cautious hand the trembling beam
That balances my fate. It is arriv'd.—
Snares are about his path. He couches pleas'd,
Nor notes the huntsman's trains. Smile, monarch,
smile!
Death too shall smile, and the polluted earth,
That open'd for the guiltless lowly-born,
Shall clasp the mighty with a stern embrace.
Smile, monarch, smile; put on that bitter smile,
Which from the breast of Morton chas'd his love,
As the fierce sun, rending the summer cloud,
Scares from the gentle flower, to which he clung,
The gilded fly that courts the wanton air.

Monarch, be proud, be thoughtless as of yore,
Wrestle for victory with the foe of life,
Win him to do thee service with thy tongue!
Will he not hear thee, king? O he is cold,
He wears a smile like thine; it laughs to scorn
The sighs of mercy and the throbs of woe.
Like thine it battens on the strife of soul,
And deems the heart-groan but an infant's cry.
Like thine too shall it combat with the tears
That nature sheds; like thine shall beam to kill;
With'ring the vital sap that cheers the frame,
As the drear altar on the midnight heath
Melts with enchanted fires the waxen babe.
Soon shalt thou catch, full soon, the smile of death,
And, as his eyeless sockets glare thee wild,
In mid career of laughter madly shriek!

SCENE II.

MACLENNA, HENDERSON, *speaking to a peasant, who
passes out.*

Hen. Yes, to my lord commands. There, where
the waves
Divide the shore, and the collected sands
Embank, uniform'd by hands of men, the creek.

Mac. Youth, may a stranger, who obtrudes not
off,
Ask, if the festive tables be remov'd?

Hen. The king was rising as I left the hall.
Lady, if aught thy mind intends of prayer
Or supplication to the royal ear——

Mac. Of prayer, of supplication? Oh no, no.
Can prayer recover from the boundless main
(Where never plummet with invasive sound
Startled the throng that crowds the wat'ry world)
The treasured pearl, which, when the land first rose,
The alarmed nymphs in unseen grots conceal'd?
Can prayer throw back the marble gates of hell,
And bid the buried live? O, could it that,
This stubborn knee, that never bow'd to man,
Would wear with hourly bend the enduring flint——
But I forget me—Youth, thou know'st me not;
I and my sorrows are unknown to thee.

Hen. To win an entrance to the heart of youth,
It is enough that Sorrow calls thee hers.
He that has felt himself her iron power,
And borne in scorn the gather'd ills of years,
Looks on Affliction's children unconcern'd,
Deems it but nature's lot, and passes on.
But it were base, most base, should youth deride
That which he knows, alas! full ill to bear.
Innocence, Youth, and Pity, chain'd in one,
Twine round the opening heart their early wreaths;
The beauteous graces of the mind are they.
As years move on, come worldly Guilt and Woe;
Experience, Fortitude and Caution, then,

Guard with sedater zeal the manly breast,
And oft perform the task with care o'erstrain'd,
Driving afar the soothing Sympathy.
'These, these are virtues that become not youth.

Mac. I did not think to weep, thou gentle youth!
The griefs that rule this bosom long, O long,
Have ceased to weep; yet I perforce must weep.
Sorrow has spared thee, say'st thou? Gentle youth,
I could inform thee well where Sorrow dwells,
But it were ill, methinks, to teach thee woe.

Hen. In truth, dear lady, Woe has spared me
long;
Yet I am told my infant days were sad.
An orphan I. My parents early died.
I knew them not, and therefore mourn'd them not.
Yet it oft sits with sadness on my soul,
That in this world of ills I stand alone.

Mac. Aye, aye, 'tis there. To know, to love,
to feel.
Why, whence are these—why, whence these foolish
tears? —
Thou art alone: but thou art cherish'd here;
The lady Ruthven loves thee, loves thee well.
Wouldst thou not joy to call her sister, youth?

Hen. My sister, sister! O it were a bliss
Dearer than aught beside the world could give.
Attachment most impassion'd but desires
That (which it ne'er can be) to crown its health.
Love, love itself were valueless to that.

The love that heaves the lover's breast is wild,
 Borrows its fires from the deluded eye,
 And seldom boasts that wisdom owns the flame.
 The mute affection that a parent asks
 Is reverence too unequal to be love.

The warmth that binds a brother to the soul
 Is manly warmth, oft honest and oft rude,
 With more of duty than of fondness grac'd.
 But he who feels his glad pulse leap with life,
 And knows that life from the same source deriv'd
 Kindles the bosom of a gentler form,
 Turns to that bosom with a gush of heart,
 Watches its heavings with an eager zeal
 Temper'd with tenderness, tho' arm'd with right.—
 A sister! O it were a bliss—Speak, speak,
 How have I err'd? O speak—what shakes thee thus?

“ *Mac.* If the rich globe hung balanc'd on a thread
 “ (Were there no way to rend the twine of life,
 “ Which, when he drew the light, the Sisters spun—
 “ The Sister Destinies, whose dole is fate—
 “ Were there no way to lull the sleepless eye,
 “ That, as they labour in the cavern'd earth,
 “ Is turn'd incessant on the brazen vase
 “ Where lies in mystic folds the precious gift),
 “ Severing the fatal thread, this faithful hand
 “ Should plunge the round ball headlong into night,
 “ And with huge ruin wreck myself and all.

“ *Hen.* Whose life? what ruin? Mercy guard thee,
 lady! ”

SCENE III.

MACLENNA, GOWRIE. HENDERSON, *who afterwards retires.*

Gow. Ruthven demands thee, boy.

Hen.

My lord——

Gow.

'The time

Brooks not delay. There, where the gallery winds,
In conference with the king, he waits thy coming.

—He goes: to free me from my pledge he goes,
Nor have I sworn in vain. Say, is he school'd
To the bold toil? Speak, is his birth reveal'd?

Mac. Not yet from me.

Gow.

'Tis better as it is.

That shall be Ruthven's task. I swear again,
Should the king's fall be doom'd, he falls by him.

Mac. O would to heav'n that I, that I myself,
Array'd in terror, stood before his eyes,
His closing eyes, and triumph'd in his fate!—
Gowrie, if more than woman's anger fires
This breast, capacious of a full revenge,
Give me, O give——

Gow.

Macleenna, I have sworn,
Should the king die, by Henderson he dies.
I am not wont to start at petty wrongs,
Nor when a deed of wonder claims the man
Is my soul apt to stagger back at shades—

For, with the brave, to meditate 's to do.
Base is the will that wishes and repines
And yet foregoes the wish ; like the half-thought
That fades along the fibres of the brain,
And dies ere it be born, most mean, most base.
But though I would not play the virtuous fool,
And palter with the means of gallant daring,
Yet should I hold it poor to practise wrong,
Where wrong avails not to build up the fane
That, to my glory sacred, woos the stars.
If the swarth monarch of the land of Nile,
Striking the ground, had seen the immortal piles,
That bear mute wonder into distant climes,
Rise, like an exhalation, o'er the soil ;
Would it have matter'd, that in pride they rose
Toil-less and guiltless of a people's groan ?
Is't not enough, Maclenna ? I have sworn :
If the king bleeds, by Henderson he bleeds..

Mac. What means my lord ?

Gow.

That what is said, is said :

That what is said, is said ; what sworn, is sworn.
That the deceit which profits not is folly.
That unavailing wrong is foul, foul wrong,
O he does ill who husbands not his fame.
Be nobly wrong when noble mischiefs rise,
But squander not the strength in needless sin.
When my brave father died, I fled ; fled far.

Power's frowning brow forbade me to return.
At length, so will'd Caprice, it calls me back.
With lavish hand it heaps upon me gifts.
I mean not to be won, and therefore speed,
Instant, to risk the deed that stamps me man.
If it be left undone another hour,
Some unsought boon, perchance, may be conferr'd,
And each pedantic mouth with moral prate
Shall ope to charge ingratitude upon me.
Now, therefore, now——

Mac. Be dar'd the deed of death !

Why, whence this doubt to do what Fate decrees ?

Thy buried ancestors command thee on !

Gow. Maclenna, they that cold are hous'd in
clay

Break not their rest for such a cause as ours.
I well believe, a mind like Ruthven's train'd
Dwells on each woman-tale, and thinks that Heav'n
Speaks with oracular organ in each blast.
It is not so with me. My faith is here,
The hand that executes, the heart that prompts !
The time, though short, is sure : then mark me, lady ;
Thy brother Logan with a glance of fire
Scatters, like morn, pale Superstition's dream.
Where England borders on the Scottish realm,
Wash'd by the sea, his antient castle stands.
Thou know'st the watchful eye that England holds
O'er Scotland's welfare :—briefly let me say,

That on her throne there sits a wondrous dame,
Who, when her end is glorious, dares the means.—
James once secur'd, intriguing France in vain
Shall strive to shake with inland broils our isle.
Prompted by me, in casual intercourse,
(For common hours, though play hours to the weak,
Are those in which the wise man issues forth,
The spy o' the naked land) the laird of Ramsay
Won to this visit his unguarded chief.
Alike unknowing my design they came.
All is arrang'd to bear the monarch hence.
A vessel is in sight, the castle arm'd.
Imperial England shall receive the victim,
And power, reward and vengeance all be ours.
Ruthven, though somewhat prone to act the saint,
Is too, too far advanc'd to thwart me now.
Yet 'tis my wish to soothe him, if I can.
If thou wilt aid, 'tis well. If not, still, still——

Mac. Wilt aid? What aid canst thou expect
from me?

Why, Gowrie, wouldst thou treat me as a girl,
A love-sick girl, whom promises delude,
Oaths, made in villainy, fulfill'd in sport,
Fram'd, labyrinth-like, to cheat the wilder'd sense?
What tell'st thou me of Logan? am I his?
Had he not hid in distant lands his name,
Vengeance ere now had thunder'd in our cause.
And wouldst thou soothe me with a tale like this?
Thou dar'st not hope it.—

Gow. Lady, I have said.

I will not stain with useless blood the sword,
Nor, when Success with silent smile descends
To guide my footstep through the moon-light vale,
Fright with the din of arms the peaceful path.

Mac. Gowrie, proceed not. Dangers are abroad.
Thou know'st me not. The feelings that are here—

Gow. Maclenna, Feeling is the boast of youth.

Feeling is o'er with me. Me Reason rules.

Feeling, much talk'd of, lives but for an hour.

The spectre of the wretch condemn'd at noon

Haunts not the genial banquet of the judge.

The sapient leech who tends the sick man's couch

Leaves him to die, and hastens gaily home.

The lordly chief, whose potent voice, like Fate,

Issued the word that kills its millions, war,—

Speeds to the festal show, where glancing feet

Weave the light dance, where music breathes around,

And laps in ecstasy his easy soul.

The idiot Feeling is not of this world:

Expell'd the populous hive, she hides her head,

And with some cottage-matron draws of heav'n.

Thou, thou, Maclenna, whose high soul—

Mac. Man, man!

How art thou thus? I gaze in scorn, in scorn—

Gow. How am I thus? It is enough I am.

It were as well recount the innumerable wave,

That scoop'd with minute coil the ocean-cave,

As to recite each sound, each shaping look,
Each dim-discover'd purpose, half-heard phrase,
That gave the lie to book-deliver'd rules,
And made me what I am. Me Reason leads:
Reason, sole guide, self-centred, self-deriv'd.
Feeling and manly Reason are at war:
O, the proud day that boasts the golden sun
Wants not the radiance of the feebler moon.
Manhood matured rejects the joys of children,
And high ambition scorns the shepherd-zeal
That pipes his passion to the plaintive eve.
Be his to tread the vale; be ours the rock,
That, while the tempests battle o'er its brow,
Uplifts its forehead to the clouds and smiles.

Mac. Thou heartless slave! thou babbler void of
soul!

And dost thou think that me thy rhetoric wins?
And dost thou think that me this pomp of phrase
Shall teach to disbelieve what years on years
Press'd on this breast with pangs, to which were bliss
The tortures of the damn'd? And dost thou think
That e'er the impetuous flood that swells these veins,
Pausing, shall flow, dull, sluggish as the blood
That ling'ring creeps around *thy* heart's cold core?
Thee, thee affection knows not. For myself,
A heart was mine, warm as the feather'd dove's,
When fond she nestles o'er her gentle brood.
That dream is past. The fires within my breast

Still live, but live no longer for delight.
They live, live hallow'd for destruction now.
Give them to range, uncurb'd, where Justice bids,
Lest with a dragon's rage they mock restraint,
And, in unsparing vengeance issuing forth,
Deluge with one wide waste the beauteous earth.

Gow. The servants of the king are few, are mine.
Lady, farewell. Resistance is in vain.
I deem thee not so weak, to lose revenge,
Because in hope the passion of thy soul
Soar'd above *due* revenge. When men, MacIenna,
Lend me their aid, I smile and am content.
If they withhold it, in myself I trust.

Their follies move me not, nay, not their wrongs.
I should as soon rail, child-like, at the stone
That from the tall rock falling smote my brow,
As with unseemly violence scare the wretch
Who cannot be what Fate has made him not.

Mac. (stabs him). I put thee to the proof.

Gow. Damnation !—Hold—
Strike not again—It is enough—The blow—

Mac. Such be thy doom ! Now, Gowrie, for the
king !

SCENE IV.

GOWRIE, RUTHVEN.

Gow. Why, aye, this tries to the utmost. What remains?

Am I to sink forgotten? Curfed chance!
The woman towers beyond me. Be it so!
Strength ebbs apace. One effort shall be made.
The cloud built scene of grandeur fades in air.
Ruthven will never yield to England's guile.
He therefore dies. A king shall grace my fall.

Ruth. Gowrie, my brother Gowrie——

Gow. Whence art thou?

Where didst thou leave the king?

Ruth. He is enclos'd.

The snares our rashness fram'd beset his feet.
Fir'd with a monarch's pride he scorns the prayer——
Why, Gowrie, thou art pale!—O God, my brother!

Gow. The king, the treach'rous king! Lead, lead me hence.

Give me to face him, and I die content.
The villain servant of a faithless chief——
There is no time for words. The faithless king——
He must not, shall not triumph o'er us all.
Thy father and thy brother——Lead me hence.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

JAMES. HENDERSON *armed*.

*A cabinet. Doors on each side. Another entrance
from the middle of the scene.*

James. COMES he not yet ? This, this is mockery.
Nature, O nature struggling at my heart !
Plac'd above men, I yet am man, and mine
The doubts and fears of man. This pause—this pause.
I look'd not for delay. Aught, aught but this.
O Resolution, thou art link'd to clay,
And weakness is thy portion ! Soul, be firm.
Break not an oath undried upon the lip.
If Falsehood stable in the breast of kings,
Earth will again to desert wildness run,
And wolves usurp the palace. I am strong ;
And as the cedar roots him to the ground,
And lifts his high top tow'rd the face of heav'n,
I mock the shaft of malice.

Hend.

This is ill,

(Would it were o'er!) most ill. It shakes me, this.

James. Then, when the danger presses, is the praise.

To eat, to drink, to smile when all else smiles,

To do what nought provokes me not to do,

Poor, poor and little is the virtue there.

The enfeebled spirit, when the time cries Do,

Asks what is to be done. The time once past——

O never will I earn mine own reproach.

Life bought with shame is death without its hopes.

A wounded spirit and a care-worn frame.

Better he false to me, than I to Heaven.

Ill shows the dagger rais'd against the throne,

But worse the sceptre warring on the skies.

Hend. Why am I talk'd to this? why stand I thus,

Like some inferior spirit spell-bound here,

To act the bidding of a master power

Reckless of what it bids? O Majesty,

How poor a mock omnipotence hast thou,

When a boy's hand confines thee! Be thou firm,

Firm, armed hand! He may be honest still.

Obedience, thou art wakeful to thy crime,

Sworn to thy blindness only. Coward Doubt,

Steal not the props of confidence away,

Nor pluck reliance from the heart of truth.

Is life so mere a cheat, that virtue wins

No note, no passport in the path she takes?

Are years of honour nothing? Coward Doubt,

Taint not my growing youth with aged fears,
Nor let Suspicion ere its hour intrude
To blast Imagination's wholesome fruits,
And plant with thorns fair Nature's painted vales.

SCENE, II.

JAMES, HENDERSON, RUTHVEN.

Ruth. My feet have brought me hither, not my
will.

I am arriv'd, but know not how I came.
The stairs that I ascended fled beneath me
More numerous than of old. It is the place.
For there the gallery branches to the left.
It is the place. The portal stopp'd me not,
But yielded to my hand, although it shook.
The step, that bore me onward, stagger'd too.
Thou, guileful Night, hast witness'd such a tread.
For thou hast seen slow stealing through the glen,
Groping and stumbling o'er an unblest grave,
The murderous ruffian in his secret haunt.
It is not night, nor mine the work of night.
The day is full of gawds: it wantons on
Scorning yon sable speck, that gathering thick
In mutinous pomp and sullenness of hue
Scowls on the gorgeous sun's imperial fires.

Beam on, proud sun ! Not mine the work of night.
Beam on, proud sun !—That which Heav'n wills it aids:
Whom it corrects, it loves ; whom loves, it tries.

O word of mystery, if I read you wrong,
I am more damn'd——That, that way, lies despair.
There too is pride, there stubbornness of will.
Not obstinate, not peevish to the skies,
Is the submission that submits and weeps.

Heav'n claims not always all that it enjoins.

The worship is the obedience, not the deed.

O that an arm of light would issue forth
From yon dark cloud, and drive my footsteps back !

O that a misty column would arise
Curling from earth, and fill the space between !

O that, commission'd from some pitying orb,
A rushing wind would snatch the victim hence !

O that a voice ethereal and benign——

All, all is vain : for there, lo there he stands,
And walls of adamant enclose me round.

James. He comes, and I am sav'd. For this, for
this,

Strength'ner of hearts, whatever else betide,

Thou ever present in the hour of need,

For this at least I lowly bow me down !

The compact is perform'd. Unscath'd have pass'd

The feet of honour o'er the burning marl.

Joy ! joy ! Preserv'd the treasure of the house,

Poor is the plunder, though the building fall.

Ruth. Departed spirits of an injur'd race,
Hover around me as I lift the point,
And lend celestial temper to the steel!
For not from me, for not from mortal hand,
Issues the stroke that wounds the martyr's breast.
The hallow'd instrument of ire is Heaven's,
And ye the ministers that guide it home!

James. Ruthven, the darkness of thine eye denotes
The settled midnight of a guilty soul.
I know that, lifted o'er the crowd, 'tis mine,
Planted the mark of envy, to sustain
The billowy menace of each chafing surge:
I know, and I submit. From thee, from thee—
I came to thee a guest, I came in love.
Ruthven, with guile, inhospitable guile,
Hither from aid didst thou seduce me far,
Fetter'd me with an oath, and left me captive.
A powerless bar was yon fear-stricken youth.
But thou hadst bound me in a charmed chain.
And I should scorn me, more than I do thee,
However tempted and however mov'd,
Had I, whilst speeding to the throne divine
The faithful vow ascended up to God,
Forgetful of its purport, stoop'd to break
That patient silence I had sworn to keep.

Ruth. King, thou dost ill. I, I too have an oath.

James. However swift the troublous moment roll,

"The good man feels at once his part assign'd*,"
Nor quits the post of duty but with life.
Not void the covenant, though made with thee.
The temple still upholds its arched roof,
Though at its shrine the assassin lurk beneath.
The pledge redeem'd, or liberty or death.

Ruth. Call not the pausing adder from his cell.
It is to stir the tiger with a reed,
To rouse mine anger with a warring tongue.
Too soon, too soon for me and for thyself——
I had a father. Bright the warrior stood
In the meridian blaze of wealth and fame;
The tempest lower'd, and all his fires decay'd.
I had a brother. Had? within this hour
His manly front he rear'd in pride to heaven.
O'er him the blast of dissolution sped,
And he too claims acquaintance with the worm.
For them Necessity withdrew not back,
Nor yet for thee shall she withhold the blow.

H. n. My spirits fail. My breath too—sick, sick,
sick.

James. What, Gowrie dead?—Thou hast not murder'd him!

My saviour, my preserver, dead, dead, dead!
Globe of the world, if crimes, if crimes like these——

* An expression of this nature is said to have been uttered by an European Sovereign to R. B. Sheridan, Esq. in June 1800.

Ruth. No. Heav'n forefend!—These hands, these
unstain'd hands,
Fair, and untainted with the crimson spot——
O God, O God! these very hands ere long——
Well, shudder not, my soul. 'Tis Gowrie bids:
Gowrie himself, the saviour! In the grave
There is no fraud, corruption cannot lie.

James. All, all is false, since thou and he are false!
I'll not believe it. Thou, unhinged earth,
Dost thou not heave through all thy pillar'd frame?
O luckless royalty, O ill-starr'd power,
Where shalt thou find a breast on which to lean,
When these, when these are faithless?—Help, ho! help!
I will not parley more.

Ruth. Peace—prithee, peace.
Death is upon thee. Do not urge the stroke
The spirit of estrangement is abroad,
And wert thou mail'd in tenfold purity——
Pure! innocent! Thou innocent, thou pure!
O wert thou so, though bending down to earth
The darken'd welkin touch'd the smoking hills,
And from the midst a visible angel call'd,
I would not harm ——

Hen. For pity's sake, my lord,
For pity and for honour, O my lord ——

Ruth. Ha, thou dost well: Thou dost remind me
well.

For this wast thou brought hither—Look ; thro' him,
Through him my father died. Look on, behold.
Through him too thine ! so mercy save my soul
As I speak true (and I have need of mercy)—
Through him too thine ! Take this, and stab for justice !

Hen. Never. So help me blessedness above !
Rather than lift mine arm against the life
Of him, who Heav'n-appointed sits enthron'd
To publish judgment through a guilty realm ;
Rather than touch with sacrilegious hand
A single hair of his anointed head ;
I would abjure the accursed gift of birth,
And shed my young blood drop by drop for his !
Thou art deceiv'd, my master, art betray'd.
The piety that should protect betrays ;
And the parental urn thou dost embrace,
Tumbling amain, drags thee too to the dust.
Thou art deceiv'd, betray'd, and basely sold.
It is the earl, it is the gloom-fed earl——
That lures thee from the loyalty which once
Built in thine heart's warm core her holiest shrine——

Ruth. There is no earl—Away, fond boy, away.
They come—they come !—Then all retreat is vain.
This for mine oath.

SCENE III.

Noise without. The middle door is burst open. RUTHVEN rushes on the king. HENDERSON places himself between. RAMSAY, ERSKINE, &c. pass before and attack RUTHVEN. MATILDA.

*Hen. (turning to protect Ruthven) Save, save him !
save my master !*

*Ruth. (falls) Not mine, not mine, the deed for
which I die.*

*Hen. (throwing himself on the body of Ruthven) My
lord, my master ! O my gentle master !*

*Erskine. Look to the door. How fares it with the
king ?*

*James. Most like a man half-doubtful if he lives,
Snatch'd at the midnight hour from raging fires.*

*Mat. Guard thee, my brother ! Gowrie is no more ;
Slain, basely slain. Foul Treachery is at work.
Bid the house arm. Guard, Ruthven, guard thee well.*

*James. No, the foul work is o'er, Its end is there.
There, Treason, read the recompense of ill,
Nor mock the majesty of wakeful Heav'n.*

*Mat. Treason ? What Treason ?—Ruthven, Ruthven
dead ?*

*Then there is nothing left on earth for hope,
And in the wide, wide world I stand alone !*

James. Lady, may pains surpassing thought be
mine——

Mat. Ruthven, protector of mine orphan'd youth;
Thou guardian of mine honour and my fame,
Wake from the sleep of death that weighs thee down;
Leave me not lonely on the desert earth!
Thou other father to mine early years,
Thou stay, thou column of my life to come!
Hear me, my brother, leave me not alone.
If I have lov'd thee with a double love,
A daughter's reverence and a sister's zeal,
Wake to my prayers. Blood, blood is on thy face—
But what of that? I'll kiss the stains away.
Hear'st thou not, Ruthven? Cold, pale! cold and
dead!

If thou awak'st not to Matilda's cries,
Thou art indeed beyond the reach of aid!
Gone, gone, quite gone! My brother, O my brother!
My gallant and my kind!

James. Thou hapless maid!

Mat. Talk not to me. Barbarian, monster, king!
Comest thou in wantonness of pride, here, here,
Beneath our roof to wreak the thirst of gore
That parches thee within, that dries thee up,
And drains the genial dews of social love?
Through thee the father died. An angry hand
Eager for spoil tore his domains away.
One brother fled. A second still remain'd,

To rear mine infancy with soft'ring care.
And didst thou hide thine hatred but for this?
Didst thou with feign'd contrition lure him back
Only for this—that both, that both might die?
The cup of health, when pledg'd by thee, is bane.
Thou fittest at the feast, and deck'd in smiles
Holdest intelligence with Death, who notes
The doom of those whom most thou dost carest!
Mock me not, king. The weapons are unsheath'd,
Unwip'd and glitt'ring in the assassin hands.
Well, murder'd Ruthven, well didst thou pronounce,
That there *were* wrongs of force enough to tear
Each cherish'd duty from the alarmed mind;
To stain allegiance with the blush of shame,
And make despair religion! Powerful Nature,
Thine are primæval rights, which will be heard!
Which fire me now, which madd'ning drive me wild!

James. O sacred be they ever! sacred now!
To fence affection round with equal law,
And bind in harmony the moral world,
Were kings ordain'd: for that the sceptre given.
I will not violate the fount of tears,
I will not trespass on the secret grot
Where partial Pity hangs the tablet up,
Nor chide the sorrows that defame the throne.
It is the lot of high-plac'd human frailty
To bear the brunt of every rude offence.
Infirmity, though eagle-eyed to spy,

And as the beaver watchful to repair
Each crevice of a wrong, is human still.
Error is man's birth-portion. But of this,
Of this on which thine accusation builds,
As I am guilty, so devour me Hell—
As I am guiltless, so defend me Heaven!

Hen. Sweet lady, ever honour'd, ever lov'd!
And not less lov'd because affliction now
Makes even the tear of such a thing as I
Less valueless than once!—Too sure he died,
(Grief, give me way) and O too sure he died
The hapless victim of his vain attempt!

SCENE IV.

JAMES, &c. MACLENNA, armed peasants, servants,
&c.

Mac. Behold him there, the artificer of blood!
Behold him there, the trampler o'er the slain!—
Now, now, my countrymen! if yours are hearts
That know to feel and that refuse to fear,
That deep engrave a benefit receiv'd,
And swell tumultuous at an offer'd wrong;
If yours are hands the ministers of hearts,
(Hands to whose grasp, her bandage pluck'd aside,
Justice herself commends the unerring sword)
Now, now, my countrymen, in heart and hand

Rouse you to manly rage. Low, low, *he* lies,
Whose frown was pity and whose smile was health;
Whose herald was content, whose path was peace.
He, at whose tread the threshold of each cot
Pour'd itself out in blessings on his head,
Low lies in dust. There, there the assassin stands!
The man of blood, the trampler o'er the slain!—
What! shall he triumph? shall he stab? then laugh,
Masking in sovereignty the right to kill,
And bid us hence?—O, let it not be said!
The bleeding tide on yonder earth cries out,
And steams in silent eloquence to Heaven!

Hen. Madmen, away!—touch not with impious
hands

This earthly image of the Lord of hosts!
Madmen, away!—ere lightnings from beneath
Scatter your ashes whitening o'er the land!—
I, I am low, a peasant as yourselves;
Like yours the love—No, all your loves in one
Will not make up the worship of this heart.
O it were beggary of words to name
The zeal with which I serv'd him, common love.
It is a sin that presses on my soul,
He whelm'd in lasting night, that I survive!
But there is yet a task of duty left
That nails me moveless to the house of death,
That, like a statue, plants me at his tomb.
O for a fire-wing'd cherub's armed strength,

O for a flame-tipt sword to guard the spot !
Back, in the spirit of my master, back !
Heap not new crimes upon his bleeding corse.
Error, the child of Weakness and of Grief,
With the fair seeming of a brother's guile,
Woo'd him to scorn : Rebellion seiz'd her hour,
And mark'd him hers : he yielded, and he fell.
Back, in the spirit of my master, back !
His dark offence still bears a soothing plea,
And God in mercy shall pronounce the doom.—
Back, madmen, back ! nor call the thunder forth.
Load not the trembling balance of his fate,
Nor cast him out in fiery floods to bathe !

Mac. O, spite of hell ! it joys me while it wounds.
They quail, the slaves ! the boy-tongue strikes them
down !

Hen. How Gowrie died, is hid. But Ruthven's
self

In passion's fullest swell absolv'd the king.
The struggling virtues of his heart long, long
Restrained his arm. He gave the steel to me—
Talk'd somewhat of a father, bade me strike——
I well believe my father died (what time
Conspiracy led forth his vassal train
And bade defiance to the unsettled throne)
The weak attendant of superior might :
But wrong invests not wrong with right to wield

The venom'd weapon of unsanction'd ire.
The murder of the guiltless rises high,
And with incessant clamour wakes the stars :
But O, when *Royal* Innocence expires,
Pierc'd by the sword of unrelenting wrath,
The heaving bosom of the Earth gives way,
The entwined cords of amity are rent :
The thousand, thousand charities of life,
Link within link, that form the chain of love,
Shiv'ring in splinter'd fragments, startle Peace :
She shrieks—and with her rest and joy depart,
Anguish and desolations countless come :
A vaporous blood-cloud shades the groaning land,
And the red sun is blotted out from heaven :
Till Time, the cormorant, swallows up the slain,
Brooding o'er all, and sleeps in death the soil.

Mat. Begone, my friends ! These tears perforce
will stream :

Read, read in them the struggles of my breast—
Read too in them the thanks your love demands.
Press, press not further. Leave me, worthy friends !
To right the injur'd lives a God in heaven,
And Law, the image of his will, on earth.

*[Henderson throws himself at Matilda's feet, and
weeps on her hand. The armed crowd retires.]*

Mac. Confusion, folly, madness !—Mock'd !
defied !—

O phrensy of affection!—idle heart,
That lull'd me in oblivion as he spoke,
Nor struck indignant when the storm was up!
Baffled, defied!—O changeful, coward throng!—
And shall the planted of the hand prevail
To thwart the hand that planted? Never, never.
Sov'reign, give ear. The trial ends not thus.
Arm not with thoughtlessness thy conscious heart,
But to the voice that soon shall cease to speak,
Patient give ear. I have not long to live.
The name of exil'd Logan bears a sound
Not by the Throne unheard—His sister I—
Thou know'st the husband of that sister died.
No traitor he, not his the crime of arms;
He died the son of science and of peace,
Martyr to Law (Law, Law is all in all,
The stay, the staff, on which Matilda leans).—
I had a daughter: Morton woo'd the girl.
You, you forbade the nuptials: She too died.
The sov'reign winces not: Law sanctions all,
Law and its hireling Custom sanction all.
Law visits on the child the parent's sin;
Law (the bright image of the mind divine,
Reason's fair type, perfection's other self),
Because the father errs, despoils the son;
Sows in his infant breast the thorns of hate,
And wonders at the growth. Law hangs the thief,
The puny, pilf'ring knave who filches bread;

* But dauntless treads the patrimonial foil,
Snatches the prize, and glorying stamps it hers.
O madness of deception ! Law, yes, Law
Cements, 'tis true, the fabric of despair,
That courtesy calls social ; Law, yes, Law,
Crushing with Babel-pressure all beneath,
Rivets with bolts the pyramid of ill ;
And with the force of adamant confirms
To each his lot—to Tyranny his wealth,
To Lowliness his beggary and taunts !
Law signs the punishment, Law makes the crime.
Law—Law is honour, feeling, justice, power !
Law—is my mock. I trample on it thus !

[As MacIenna advances to strike the king, Henderson springs up, catches her arm, and in the struggle stabs her. She casts a look of mingled expression on Henderson, and falls.]

* An assertion was made a year or two ago by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, that Property was the creature of Law. Lord Lansdown contended that Law was the creature of Property. The Marquis was right.

END OF THE FIFTH ACT.



